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Jeremy Porter & The Tucos – Candy Coated Cannonball

🕒 3 Days Ago by patrickdonders



Jeremy Porter & The Tucos is an original Rock band from Detroit. Part power-pop-rock (like Cheap Trick, Hüsker Dü and X). Part whiskey-soaked twang (like Uncle Tupelo, Gram Parsons and Waylon Jennings).

Sweet Sweet Music spoke to Jeremy about how Candy Coated Cannonball, the new record, came about.

What was the moment you knew you were on to something?

Man, that's a tough question. I guess the first time would be in my first band The Regulars back in high school up in the UP of Michigan when we were just starting to introduce our own songs into the mix. We did all covers for a while, punk, 60s, garage stuff. Then, with our own songs, it was the realization that... "yeah – we can do this!" Of course, our songs were derivative and immature, but that didn't matter at that age. It was empowering and fulfilling. Doing what we saw the bands we loved do was within reach.

How did Candy Coated Cannonball come together?

It was very deliberate and planned out, as most things Tucos are. When Patty left the band at the end of 2018, the plan was to bring Bob in, spend a year writing the record and playing shows, breaking him in, and then record right off the road. I had a bunch of songs ready and wrote the rest over that year. We

demoed over the summer, toured in the fall, and started recording on January 2, 2020. It was nauseatingly calculated.

When did you decide to start asking for opinions on the new songs?

Well, that's an ongoing process in the basement with the boys. Other than that, I don't think I asked for any opinions. I seldom share the demos. Ya know, I did send them to my friend Ian Trumbull (from the band Ypsitucky) out in California – I think we trust each other with those things and pretty much no one else outside of our bands. I'll hear about it from my wife upstairs after practice in the basement sometimes – "What was that song you played 85 times tonight? Yeah...needs some work." She hears 'em first ya know, and she's brutally honest.

The meaning of success has changed over the years. What would success look like for the new record?

It sure has. At this point, success for me is just still doing it. Still putting out music that I'm proud of, playing shows, touring, writing songs that I think were worth writing. The other stuff is gravy. We were happy to get played on Little Steven's channel on SiriusXM recently, it's always nice to get good press, sell records, have your friends and strangers sing your praises – stuff like that, but I'd still do it without all that. At this age and point in my musical career, keeping on keeping on is success.

How great is the urge to stay creative? To keep writing songs and lyrics?

It comes and goes, and always has for me. It's been very difficult over the pandemic, to be honest. Part of that was the focus on mixing, mastering, and release of the album, but I just didn't have the gumption to put pen to paper much. I've always been streaky – I'll write a lot, then not much, then a lot again, but it's been pretty dry. In October I rented a house on the Mississippi River in Wisconsin alone for a week and took a stack of half-written songs to finish. I came out with a bunch of songs but failed to keep the momentum going when I got home. Something snapped a few weeks ago and I've been writing again, so that's encouraging. Maybe the optimism of getting back out in front of people again.

As an artist, you chose to show your emotions to the world. Is it always comfortable to do so?

Absolutely not. It's a weird thing. I think a lot of songwriters are introverts. I know I am. I think it's our way to get what we want to say out there, without being in an awkward conversation at a dinner party or something. Then there are cases where something is about someone specific, and it's in the back of your mind what they'll think, and that can't help but creep in there sometimes. But you gotta get it out, and you can't worry about it. One way or another there's some anxiety involved.

What's the gig you will always remember? And why?

There are a few that stand out. We had a couple of shows in England a couple of years ago that I'll remember very fondly – amazing nights. Today I'll say a show we played at The Brass Rail in Fort Wayne, Indiana with Raelyn Nelson (Willie's Granddaughter). It's been difficult for us to get in there, the place was packed, and it was rowdy as hell. Playing with Lydia Loveless, Beach Slang, Sponge and so many other great bands has been memorable as well.

Lyrics are too often taken for granted. What is the line of text or are the lines of text that you hope listeners will remember? And why?

Hmmm... it's hard to look at your own work that way. On the new record, there are a few lines that resonate with me personally, but I think once it's out there, listeners will consume it their own way and make their own attachments, and I'm perfectly fine with that. I like when someone latches onto something that I never considered anything special. Once in a while, I'll come up with something that I think really "nails it" but it feels a bit weird to toot my own horn that way. There's a line in "Dead Ringer" that goes "Must be my lazy eye or my wasted friends, the lack of means to all my ends, or the way I almost die when she's around" and that pretty much sums up my teenage years in a few short words.

When was the last time you thought 'I just wrote a hit!'?

Haha! Man...what's a hit? I write a lot of songs. Most of them are throwaways that I never show the band and never play. Occasionally I'll come up with something that I can tell early on will make the record. "Dead Ringer," mentioned above, was one of those – the demo stuck with me, the lyrics and hook were good, I knew it would make the record before we ever played it.

Is recording a record easier than getting it heard nowadays?

Getting your music heard is exhaustive, endlessly frustrating, and most often thankless. The rejection and, worse yet, ambivalence are crippling. Good people like yourself who help mean so much to the musicians. I'm so thankful for every pair of ears, every podcast play, every download purchased, every blog mention... anyone who cares enough to give it a minute.

Recording an album is a shit-ton of work. I'm not sure it's easier, but at least it's in your control, it's up to you what you put into it and get out of it. Getting it heard is much less controllable.

Recording music. What's all the fun about?

I approach it very much like work. We've got a job to do; we're spending a lot of money, time, and energy on it, and we have a responsibility (to ourselves, mostly, I guess) to make it as good as it can be. It's long hours, heavy work, and, as we talked about above, the potential returns can be...prohibitive, if that's your motivation. All that said, it's incredibly fun to have an arsenal of gear and sounds at your fingertips, great musicians in the room making your songs come to life, and hearing a playback of something that's better than you ever knew it could be – it's all easily worth it. The camaraderie of a few people working on something for the pure sake of the love of the work is a big part of it too, and there are some laughs along the way. But it's work first, for me at least, and a lot of it.

Playing music in front of a crowd. What's all the fun about?

Well, that's a different monster, isn't it? That's something special on a couple of different levels. It's the culmination of all the work we've been talking about – all that writing, demoing, recording... Going after the press and radio. It's the moment you're up there and you remember coming up with that riff, or the time in the basement that Gabriel said we should do the chorus twice there, or that line that always makes the girls smile. It's the payoff for the press you got in that city that week from the kid at the college paper who's at the show with her parents, the table in the corner that read a blog that said you sound like The Smithereens, who maybe you do or don't, but they love The Smithereens so it's totally cool! The friends who surprised you in Kentucky or upstate New York by driving in from Cleveland to see

you. The sweat and ringing ears and torn up fingernails. It's the payoff for all the work. Nothing beats that – there's nothing better.

You can't control the way people 'hear' your music. But if you could make them aware of certain aspects, you think, set your songs apart. What would they be?

I agree that you can't control how your music is consumed. I've been part of that exact conversation a couple of times recently. I guess for that reason I wouldn't focus in on what sets my songs apart, but with every song we do, we try to deliver the best "product" that we can. I say that because it's not just the song – it's the parts, the lyrics, the tones, the mix, the cover art. Painstaking effort goes into all that – and the most efficient, economical arrangement is key – nothing wasted, nothing indulgent. Editing arrangements is something we work incredibly hard at – it's a part of the process that I think is very important. It's so hard to get your song to someone's ears that when it gets there it has to be as easy to consume as possible. Getting a song to that point is the culmination of the artistic process. Once it lands, it's all up to the listener.

They expect 'the roaring 20s v2.0'. What kind of party are you looking for?

I sure do hope we can get back to live music, eating in restaurants, and taking in a Detroit Tigers' game soon! I'll be happy to walk up to a stage knowing Cheap Trick will be breaking into "Hello there ladies and gentlemen! Are you ready to rock? Are you ready to rock?" any minute. I'll also be happy when I can grab a booth at the back of a dark bar with a friend or 2 and a great jukebox and argue about the nuances of rock and roll over drinks for a couple of hours. I don't need a big party – any sense of normalcy will be welcome!